



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

PREACHING IN A WORLD AT WAR¹

IV. SUBJECTS AND SUGGESTIONS

OZORA S. DAVIS, PH.D., D.D.

President of the Chicago Theological Seminary

Sin and Forgiveness

As a result of the war the new world that is emerging must reckon with changed conceptions of sin that have come out of the experiences of the soldiers. Also there are new values imported into our thought of forgiveness as we have been compelled to meet our enemies both in individual and in national relations. Not only was the war itself the most colossal of crimes, but it has been conducted in such defiance of all that humanity had agreed upon as righteous and just that we are staggered by the definitions of evil and overwhelmed by the concrete expressions of wrong standards of action. So many of the old sins were small. The fearful butchery of innocent people in Belgium and Poland and Armenia; the piracy of the seas that sinks without trace; the "no prisoners" conduct of reprisals—the world never has seen anything like this before, so terrible and so colossal. It gives us a conception of gigantic sins which we never had appreciated.

Sin had been in the world before, however. As has been said:

Probably the years of peace contained as much grotesque evil as the years of

carnage. Cancer, consumption, to say nothing of syphilis, existed then; and the underworld was crawling with iniquities much more unlovely than the shattered forms of a battlefield. All that the war has done has been to make the problem of evil living to many minds that had hitherto known little of the more tragic aspects of life. We must not allow ourselves to imagine that our experiences of these past three years have created any new difficulty for Christianity. They have only diffused the knowledge of their existence, and have given edge and point to them for us all.²

The preacher will hardly need to deal practically, however, with national responsibility for the sins of the war or its conduct. The average minister is quite powerless to control a situation involving nations at war. The moral standards of the smaller group, the community and neighborhood, and of the individual come more closely within the range of the preacher's task.

Let us look, therefore, at some of the changes that have taken place in the conception of sin within recent years, and particularly as a result of the Great War. Perhaps at no other single point does modern thought register a greater

¹ This is the concluding article by President Davis. Few series published in the *Biblical World* have attracted more attention. Our readers will be glad to know that these papers, somewhat enlarged, will soon be published by the University of Chicago Press under the title *The Gospel Message in the Light of the Great War*.

² MacLean and Sclater, *God and the Soldier*, p. 18.

transformation. In the first place, the preacher must reckon with the whole change that has taken place in our estimate of sin as a result of the social interpretation of Christianity. This is nothing less than revolutionary.

Professor Rauschenbusch has made this fact vivid by the story of the milkman, a member of a strict church, who was disciplined for having sworn a profane oath when he found that the health department of Toronto had spilled his product and marked his cans because the milk contained in them was foul. But the significance of this act on the part of the church lies in the grounds upon which it was based. The offender was put out of the synagogue,

not for introducing cow-dung into the intestines of babies, but for expressing his belief in the damnation of the wicked in a non-theological way. When his church will hereafter have digested the social gospel, it may treat the case this way: "Our brother was angry and used the name of God profanely in his anger; we urge him to settle this alone with God. But he has also defiled the milk supply by unclean methods. Having the life and health of young children in his keeping he has failed in his trust. Voted, that he be excluded until he has proved his lasting repentance." The result would be the same, but the sense of sin would do its work more intelligently.¹

The significance of this practical situation has been realized by a relatively small number of the most farsighted and courageous preachers of the immediate past. But it must break with full light across the path of every minister who is ready to bring his message to his generation with the full

power with which it is now charged as a result of the war. It will require no less courage than has been shown by the brave heralds who often have been voices crying in the wilderness. The same old slogan, "Stick to the simple gospel," will be heard from the timid and the nearsighted. But at last the gospel is becoming really simple because it drives into the daily life and finds us in the world where we live.

From another point, also, we are approaching a revision of our moral standards. The soldiers have a contribution to make to the current ethical ideal. Their moral standards have been, of course, shaped to fit the conditions of war and may therefore be questioned on the ground that they will not be the permanent standards for a world at peace. Granting this fact, it still remains true that the Great War is sure to modify our ideas of Christian morality. Perhaps it will give us a new vision of what the moral life of the Christian ought to be.

A single quotation from the literature created in the trenches will serve to set forth the problem in its simplest terms:

I was in an officers' mess sometime ago, and they were discussing a new arrival. One of them said, "He is very quiet; he doesn't drink, doesn't smoke, doesn't play bridge, and doesn't swear." "He must be religious," concluded another. That is it. The words were not spoken in malice. It is the conception of a Christian that we have given them. If the new officer had been described as cheerful, generous, hospitable, and brave, they would not have concluded that he must be religious. Yet which description is the more like Christ? How

¹ *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, p. 35.

brave, cheerful, generous, and hospitable Christ was! He was the soul of chivalry. No virtue had been associated with the new officer that a swindler and criminal might not possess, and yet he had been at once classified as a Christian. But men possessing the cardinal Christian virtues of charity, humility, joy, generosity, hospitality, hope, courage, and self-sacrifice are not classified as Christians, but merely as "good fellows." They are "white men." These "white men" may be in the Church or out of it. There is, in the popular mind, no necessary connection. That is the tragedy of the Church.¹

In almost identical terms Donald Hankey describes the moral ideals and standards of the soldiers. He says:

Here were men who believed absolutely in the Christian virtues of unselfishness, generosity, charity, and humility, without ever connecting them in their minds with Christ; and at the same time what they did associate with Christianity was just on a par with the formalism and smug self-righteousness which Christ spent his whole life trying to destroy.²

How clear it is that here we have a moral standard which is not only inadequate but wholly false. The standards of Jesus were not these superficial conventionalities. The problem of the moral standard was vividly presented early in the war in the letters from the soldiers. One of the most striking of these, which was widely quoted in America, was as follows:

The eccentricities of our chasseurs at Grenoble? Yes—I am aware of all this, yet they are good fellows. If they know how to fight, they also know how to amuse

themselves, and, my Heavens, who should reproach them for this? Here, after our men have been a whole month in the trenches, when they go down to Plainfaing, they behave like sailors after a long voyage, "they go to extremes," bottles, cigars, gay songs—everything enters in. And their chief cannot deal severely with it; in fact, he should not do so. How little it matters if, after all these careless pranks, these poor devils can dash bravely forward and "over the top." It is superfluous to assure you that the follies of your nephew are of a very limited extent. A few extra glasses of old wine, some cigarettes, and, to be quite honest, some smiles for the young Alsatian girls, that's all. Do not fear the damnation of my soul.³

This letter is from that same young Jean Rival, who said so clearly, "I will die as a Christian and as a Frenchman." It puts the soldier's sense of sin in clear light and forces some readjustments in our Puritan scale of values.

Then our own American boys went into the war and Christian workers went overseas to help them in their religious life. They also ran against a new set of conditions. The conventional Puritan standards, referred to by Tiplady and Hankey, were forced into strange adjustments. The matter is set forth by Fred B. Shipp, the treasurer and general field secretary of the Y.M.C.A. War Work Council in France. The following quotation is from the *Literary Digest* of August 17, 1918:

Warning is given congregations that they must be ready to mark the changes wrought in their pastors whom they have

¹ Tiplady, *The Cross at the Front*, p. 94.

² *A Student in Arms*, Series 1, p. 108.

³ Quoted in Maurice Barrès, *The Faith of France*, p. 238.

released for service "over there" and not be shocked thereby. For among the soldiers these men have found "the finest religious spirit you could imagine," but "no particular piety." Mr. Shipp gives in the *New York Times Magazine* a concrete instance of the change thus wrought in the clergyman at the Front:

"I remember particularly one preacher who came to France with the belief that he would save a lot of the soldiers from the tobacco evil. His personal feelings against tobacco were so strong that he felt himself unable to sell the weed in one of our canteens. This was not discovered until the clergyman had been put in charge of a hut immediately behind the lines.

"One night there was considerable infantry activity in this sector. At dawn the walking cases among the wounded began returning to a rest-station far behind the 'Y' hut. A party of twelve or thirteen under a sergeant stopt at the hut.

"The secretary-clergyman saw wounded men returning from the trenches for the first time. They said they were 'broke' and asked for chocolate. He gave it to them. He asked the men if they wanted anything else.

"The sergeant told him that the only other thing they needed was cigarets. They needed them badly. There was a supply in the hut. The antitobacco clergyman hesitated for about one-half second. Then his program for saving men from nicotin went by the board. He passed cigarets around to each of the wounded men. They departed for the rear.

"In a few minutes another group came along. They, too, needed something to smoke. Once more he abandoned his principles. A third group appeared. Again the cigarets were distributed.

"By this time the clergyman discovered that his supply of matches was practically exhausted. The fourth batch of visitors completely consumed it.

"For the rest of the day this crusader against tobacco found himself doing the only thing that would enable him to look his wounded countrymen in the eye as they stopt at the hut for rest. He kept a cigaret glowing in his own lips all day long so that each boy would be able to get a light!"

There is no man who speaks more by the book in reference to the judgment of young men, especially the American student body, than Fred B. Smith. For years he has been speaking to groups of men, holding personal interviews, and entering into the confidences of young men in an unusual degree. He has written his impressions of the moral standards of our men at the front in the *American Magazine* for November, 1918, under the title "Four Sins That the Soldiers Say They Hate." First he makes this remark concerning the results of his experiences before the war:

Before the war, I often visited our universities as a Y.M.C.A. worker, and took advantage of this opportunity to question the students about their ideas of right and wrong. I found then that they had a fairly uniform code of morals. Over and over again, when asked what they considered the worst sin a man could be guilty of, they would give the same answer, "Immorality." After that they put drinking, gambling, dishonesty, and so on.

Apparently it was a universal standard, for, no matter where the test was made, the same things were put into the list and in the same relative positions.

When Mr. Smith went to France to work with the soldiers as he had done with all classes of men in America he decided to bring out their moral ideals by such a series of questions as had yielded him such excellent results at home. He had no difficulty in securing

the replies to his questions. They were given orally and in written form. But results were surprising. The virtues and the vices that had been so easily defined at home were not at all the same as those which were stressed abroad. Mr. Smith extended the range of his inquiry; there was no change in the results. He took counsel with such men as Dr. John H. Finley, Judge Lindsey, and Raymond Fosdick. They agreed that the conclusions were valid and confirmed them by the judgment of the soldiers as expressed to them. Mr. Smith says:

All these tests, among widely separated groups, produced answers so nearly identical that it seems beyond question that we may take the result as the code of morals which our soldiers have set up for themselves.

Now, what is this code?

First—Courage.

Second—Unselfishness.

Third—Generosity.

Fourth—Modesty or Humility.

These four qualities were put at the top by such an overwhelming majority that there was absolutely no question of their place there. And when we reversed the process and asked for the "meanest sins," the answers checked up the same. For the sins placed at the head of the list were:

First—Cowardice.

Second—Selfishness.

Third—Stinginess.

Fourth—Boastfulness.

Or, as the men put it, "being a blow-hard."

Those were the things they most despised in others and most dreaded in themselves. Next to these came drunkenness and immorality, with a scattering of other things, like gambling, cruelty, profanity, and so on.

It seems strange to me now that, at first, I was a little disappointed. I had

imagined they would name a sequence of vices led by immorality, tangible things you could get hold of and dramatize eloquently. This seemed a come-down to things that were vague and even trivial; a kind of hot milk diet which strong men would find very unsatisfying.

Mr. Smith did not stop with his sense of surprise and disappointment at what he had discovered. He is not that sort of a man anyway. In his article, therefore, he goes on to discuss at length the significance of this idea of sin called out by the war. We cannot follow this in detail, but the following paragraphs give the gist of his conclusions:

The more I thought about it, the more it seemed that these soldiers had gone down to bedrock. They had passed the superficial layer of what is merely legal or illegal, and had reached the things which are fundamental. And these qualities, these traits, which they have made the basis of their code, are fundamental not merely in their life as soldiers; they are just as truly the basis for all right living, anywhere and everywhere.

For, as I see it, immorality, drunkenness, and gambling cannot live side by side with courage, unselfishness, generosity, and humility. The more you study this set of standards your boys have placed before them, the more you will be amazed by the unerring way in which they have picked out the great essentials of character. War strips the veneer from life. And just because they are soldiers, these young men have instinctively let the surface things go, and have found the influences underneath which mold that surface.

At first glance one is oppressed by a certain sense of fear at the readjustment of moral values suggested above. Does this not mean that we shall undervalue

certain most essential and sacred factors in the moral life? Surely profanity and sexual looseness and non-churchgoing represent real evils, and the moral values that they stand for must be preserved. Therefore we are reluctant to see anything done that shall in any way displace them from the position which they always have held in our definition of the Christian moral standard.

There is no doubt that we ought to be jealous for the standards of the past. It is no light matter to modify them. But on the other hand change does not necessarily involve destruction, and we can afford to be most patient and tolerant of that which effects a shift for the better, even if some of the words which seemed sacred to us are no longer used in the new statement. And there can be no doubt concerning the fact that the moral standards which the church has elevated into prominence have been too largely negative and superficial in their character. Tiplady puts this matter clearly:

Surely with our non-drinking, non-smoking, non-swearing, non-gambling, and our attendance at the Church, we are but on the outskirts both of morals and religion! It is not what a man doesn't do that marks him off as a Christian. It is what he does and is. The Christian characteristics stand out plainly in the gospels. Love is the virtue of virtues. . . . The first test, therefore, of the Christian is, "Has he charity? Does he love?" It is also the first test of the Church.¹

I have lived five long years in the East End of London, and have walked by night and day through its miles of stinking streets, where the poor are housed worse than the

rich man's horses. The pale, thin faces of the children haunt me as the horrible sights on the Somme never will haunt me, for a ragged, starving child is more terrible to think of than a youth blown to fragments or lying on a stretcher in mortal agony. The tragedy is deeper and more enduring.

He also says:

Christian conduct must no longer be merely conventional. It must be creative. There is a call for spiritual daring and adventure. As St. Paul Christianized Greece and Rome, so we must Christianize industry and politics and abolish poverty and vice. To abstain from evil is not enough; we must adventure as Wesley, Dr. Barnardo, and Florence Nightingale adventured.²

Tiplady feels that we ought to have a new moral standard which shall bring into action the virtues of *chivalry*. This is what the soldiers at the front had been displaying. They had dared to risk their lives for a cause and to face peril of every kind in the endeavor to have justice and truth prevail in lands to which they were practical strangers. The title to the chapter in which Tiplady makes his appeal conveys the truth in brief terms, "The Chivalrous Religion Our Citizen Soldiers Will Require."

Sherwood Eddy reported the results of his observations among the soldiers in France and said that the moral standards obtaining in the trenches "are the sanctions of group morality. They [the soldiers] have very lax ideas about drunkenness and sexual irregularity, but they have very strict ideas about the sacredness of social obligations within the groups to which they belong."³ Mr. Eddy finds that the virtues admired

¹ Tiplady, *The Cross at the Front*, p. 96.

² *Ibid.*, p. 106.

³ *With Our Soldiers in France*, p. 133.

most by the soldiers are courage, brotherliness, loyalty, honesty, and cheerfulness. This brief quintet, while not comprehensive or final, is about the same in the minds of nearly all who have written on the moral standards of the trenches.

Raymond Fosdick wrote concerning the moral life of the soldiers:

I saw our troops storm Vaux on July 1; I saw the marines holding the line at Château Thierry early in June, and I have seen the conditions under which our fellows habitually live in the trenches at the Front. Somehow, after what I have seen, I have not much patience with those people back home who fret about the morals of our Army. For in a big sense, our fellows are living on a plane such as men seldom attain. In point of devotion, unselfishness, cheer under hardship, a sense of honor, and a spirit of fortitude and courage, they make the people who piously condemn their morals back home look small and mean.

Even in the narrowest interpretation of the word, we have little cause to worry about the morals of our men. The official statistics show that the venereal-disease rate in the American Expeditionary Forces is less than 1 per cent. This is better than the conditions here in the camps at home, and it is infinitely smaller than the prevailing disease-rate in the civilian population of the United States. As far as drunkenness is concerned, I saw thousands of American troops under all conditions, both at the Front and in the rear, and I did not see a single man intoxicated.

I do not want to give the impression that our men with the American Expeditionary Forces are saints—they are not. They are human fellows, and even when out of the

trenches are living a life of which we Americans back home can well be proud. . . . The question is whether we are worthy of them.¹

Donald Hankey was courageous enough to seek a general principle which might be followed in the effort to discover a moral standard for the Christian life which will inevitably emerge into being as a result of the war. He formulated his conclusion in these words:

We have got to follow what we think right quite recklessly, and leave the issue to God; and in judging between right and wrong we are given only two rules for our guidance. Everything which shows love for God and love for man is right, and everything which shows personal ambition and anxiety is wrong.²

Owen Seaman, in *Thomas of the Light Heart*, puts the matter thus:

His songs are not exactly hymns;
He never learned them in the choir;
And yet they brace his dragging limbs
Although they miss the sacred fire;
Although his choice and cherished gems
Do not include "The Watch upon the
Thames."

He takes to fighting as a game;
He does no talking, through his hat,
Of holy missions; all the same
He has his faith—be sure of that;
He'll not disgrace his sporting breed,
Nor play what isn't cricket. There's his
creed.³

If the Great War has revealed the enormity⁴ of sin it has also shown more clearly than we had recognized before

¹ Quoted in the *Literary Digest*, August 17, 1918.

² *A Student in Arms*, Series 2, p. 170.

³ *A Treasury of War Poetry*, p. 132.

⁴ A French officer said to Kipling, "The boche is saving the world because he has shown what evil is."

in a long time the *responsibility* for it. In the presence of Belgium, Poland, and Armenia the moral sense of humanity says, "Someone is responsible for this." We had grown somewhat apologetic about our sins. When our ancestors and our environment and our misfortunes had been assigned the share of burden which we readily loaded upon them there was a most comfortably slight weight of responsibility left to weigh us down. But no thoughtful person can deal with the fact of responsibility so lightly any longer. Little boys with their hands cut off and young French girls with their babies force us to say as we never said before, "Someone is to blame for this and those who did it shall bear the burden of their wrongdoing." Now this is altogether to the advantage of clear and clean moral thinking. We are getting closer to the heart of God. We are locating the sanctions of morality where they belong, in the nature of God himself. The time has come to infuse fresh meaning into two texts: "For I am Jehovah your God . . . ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44, 45); "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

Here is a double text for a sermon on "The Warrant for Righteousness." It gives the preacher the opportunity to lay the foundations of such a new sense of moral obligation and responsibility as will stiffen up the whole life of the church and the community. Just this plunge of practical application would not have been possible without the situation created by the Great War.

What is the Christian preacher to do as he attempts to set forth the standard of morality which the church is surely formulating under the influence of the social gospel and the chivalry of the Great War?

He will turn first of all with fresh joy and satisfaction to the teaching of the prophets and of Jesus. Both are in perfect accord in their break with the external and conventional standards of morality that tend in every age to become artificial and false. Jesus and the prophets laid their emphasis upon motives instead of conventionalities. They pierced to the heart of conduct and insisted upon the positive virtues. Under the stress of this new conception we shall do the same. This will not afford any warrant for profanity or gambling or social vices; it will not cease to place moral value on personal habits that may have been justified by the stress of war but are not permanently justified by the conditions of ordinary life. We shall, however, preach concerning the great positive and chivalric virtues as never before, with clearness and confidence.

And forgiveness will be seen to have a social value. The purpose in pardon is redemptive and restorative. Forgiven sinners are not only to "go and sin no more," but they are to fill their pardoned lives with positive good. They are to be the agents of a new redemption, for they have been lost and are found. Then forgiveness will not seem to be a sort of grandmotherly indulgence on the part of God. It will have ethical significance brought into it. It will serve a purpose in the economy of the age that is to be remade. Those who will bring

in the new era will be not only the victors who made it possible, but the restored penitents, who have learned through blood and tears, not only that the wages of sin is death, but also that we are forgiven in order that we may serve and bless.

Suggestions for Sermons on Sin and Forgiveness

Suggestion 1

"For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13).

THE FOLLY OF SIN

Study first the figure of the water as it represents God's relation to the soul. The water is vitally necessary; it brings resources for life; it cools and comforts and refreshes.

- I. Forsaking the living spring. Sin is separation from God and goodness. It puts self in the place of the Creator.
- II. Hewing out the leaking cistern. "It is hard work to be tough." And when we have learned, the job is unsatisfactory. The cistern leaks.

Suggestion 2

"For the prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me" (John 14:30).

IMMUNE

The "prince of the world" stands for evil in every form. It is everywhere. How may it be successfully met and overcome?

- I. Not by denial or escape. Whatever our theory may be, in practical experience we must face sin as a reality.
- II. Not wholly by active struggle. We must fight sin in open battle. But the enemy is too strong for us alone.
- III. By becoming immune to sin as Jesus was. There was no ground for the evil to root and grow in the soil of his soul.

- IV. Identify our purposes with those of Jesus in order that we may be free from sin as he was.

Suggestion 3

"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9).

BE CAREFUL!

This text is like a sign placed near a dangerous curve or crossing. It tells us to beware the contagious danger that lies in little sins.

- I. The apparent insignificance of the yeast in comparison with the whole lump of dough.
- II. The energies in the yeast; indefinite multiplication.
- III. Contact necessary to contagion.
- IV. The result: the lump permeated and transformed. Be careful!

Suggestion 4

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone" (Matt. 23:23).

LITTLE VIRTUES AND BIG SINS

Perhaps a more concise text would be vs. 24, "Ye blind guides, that strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel." If this is used, note the graphic explanation of it given in *The Jesus of History*, by T. R. Glover (p. 48):

Then he [the Pharisee] sets about straining what he is going to drink—another elaborate process; he holds a piece of muslin over the cup and pours with care; he pauses—he sees a mosquito; he has caught it in time and flicks it away; he is safe and he will not swallow it. And then, adds Jesus, he swallowed a camel. How many of us have ever pictured the process, and the series of sensations, as the long hairy neck slid down the throat of the Pharisee—all that amplitude of loose-hung anatomy—the

humps—two humps—both of them slid down—and he never noticed—and the legs—all of them—with whole outfit of knees and big padded feet. The Pharisee swallowed a camel and never noticed it. . . . A modern teacher would have said, in our jargon, that the Pharisee had no sense of proportion—and no one would have thought the remark worth remembering.

In developing the subject we discuss two divisions:

- I. The accidental virtues, which we ought not to leave undone.
- II. The essential virtues, which we must not fail to do.

Suggestion 5

"Evil shall slay the wicked" (Ps. 34:21).

SIN'S SUPREME ENEMY

Begin the discussion with such a familiar proverb as, "The destruction of the poor is their poverty."

- I. External opposition to sin.
 - A. Sin must be fought. Our life is an inevitable combat between good and evil. Moral passiveness or neutrality is impossible.
 - B. This struggle is long and costly. In the end goodness is triumphant because it is good.
 - C. There is a great ally for the external forces that are fighting evil; it is the self-destructive energy in sin itself.
- II. Internal self-destructive energies of sin.
 - A. Illustrations: intemperance, alcohol finally destroys its victims; lying, the liar is finally hanged with his own rope; selfishness, the selfish man may save his body but he loses his soul.
 - B. These energies are silent, constantly at work, deadly in effect.
 - C. Therefore ally your positive opposition to sin with the inner destructive agencies of evil, and be sure of the victory of goodness.

Suggestion 6

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

HARVESTERS

This is a straight sermon on "wild oats."

- I. Sowing the seed.
- II. The growing process.
- III. The crop.
- IV. The end.

The moral experience of the American fighting forces will give fresh material on this subject.

Turning specifically to the "sins that the soldiers hate," as Mr. Smith has defined them, a preacher will discover at once that they are timely in civilian life as well as among the fighting forces. Also, it is undoubtedly best to preach on the corresponding virtues rather than the vices. These virtues are courage, unselfishness, generosity, and modesty. The following notes refer to these four subjects in either their positive or negative aspects.

Suggestion 7

"A cheerful heart is a good medicine;
But a broken spirit drieth up the bones"
(Prov. 17:22).

GOOD MEDICINE

Introduce this by a study of the factors that produce morale, showing the place of courage and good cheer among them.

- I. The sources of courage.
- II. The culture of courage.
- III. The blessings of courage.

Suggestion 8

"Woe to him that is alone when he falleth, and hath not another to lift him up" (Eccles. 4:10).

FALLEN IN NO MAN'S LAND

Introduce the discussion by any of the familiar incidents concerning the relief or rescue of wounded men in No Man's Land during the war.

- I. The loss and despair of loneliness.
- II. The joy and reward of comradeship.
- III. Wounded men in the No Man's Land industrial and social life.
- IV. Where and how we can help.

Suggestion 9

"He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:39).

LIFE THAT IS LOST AND FOUND

The apparent contradiction of the text and its real consistency.

- I. Life is enriched in order that it may be expended.
- II. Expenditure of life is the only sure way of its enrichment.
- III. The blessed reaction of the two principles in experience.

Suggestion 10

"Zebulun was a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death,
And Naphtali, upon the high places of the field" (Judg. 5:18).

UNRECKONING LOYALTY

The call of duty demands that men respond with a reckless loyalty, jeopardizing their lives if necessary.

- I. Calculating and prudential service.
- II. The cost of full loyalty: death and the high places of the battlefield.
- III. True loyalty dares all this and pays the price.

Suggestion 11

"But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, in comparison of accomplishing my course" (Acts 20:24 [margin]).

THE COST OF DUTY

- I. To do one's duty is the supreme engagement of life.
- II. Physical existence is not so important as the doing of God's will

- III. The lesser good of living must not be held at the cost of the higher good of doing God's will.

Suggestion 12

"There is that scattereth and increaseth yet more;
And there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to want."

THE DIVIDED BLANKET

Fred B. Smith quotes a soldier in one of his meetings where the matter of sin was being discussed as placing unselfishness at the head of the list of virtues, and illustrating his contention by the following incident:

Well, when we were going in the other night, on our way to the trenches, I forgot my blanket. It was darned cold, too. You fellows know that. And it looked to me like I was going to freeze, out there. But when my pal found out the fix I was in, instead of guying me for being such a fool as to forget my stuff, he took out his knife and cut his own blanket in two and gave me half of it. I don't know whether that's what the preachers would call being good—but it's good enough for me!

This suggests the title above.

- I. It is cold in No Man's Land.
- II. Some men have forgotten their blankets.
- III. Other men have blankets.
- IV. What are you doing with your blanket?

Suggestion 13

"Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off" (I Kings 20:11).

THE TIME TO BOAST

- I The tendency to boast when putting on the armor.
- II The test of courage while under arms.
- III The time to boast would be when the armor is put off; but the true soldier does not boast at all.

Suggestion 14

"So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things" (Jas. 3:5).

THE GREAT LITTLE BRAGGART

- I. How easily we boast.
- II. The folly of boasting.
- III. The positive mischief of boasting.
- IV. How to curb our tendency to boast: by discipline from others; by self-control.

Death and the Life Immortal

The preacher always has been a messenger of comfort and hope to souls which must sometime inevitably face disappointment, suffering, and death as a part of mortal life. The Christian message on this matter always has been clear. Jesus defined it; the Christian theology has formulated it; Christian preachers have declared it; pastors have employed it in practical ministry. Thus in homes, in hospitals, and beside countless open graves the Christian assurance has brought hope and help to wounded hearts.

Now for almost five years the world has faced suffering and death in unprecedented proportions and in forms more terrible than nature ever designed in her most cruel moods. The casualty lists are in every daily paper. The burdened cables seem almost to sob beneath the sea. The diaries and letters of the soldiers reveal such a vivid acquaintance with death as secure civilians cannot understand. The veil of mystery and fearsomeness has been taken from the grim subject and a revealing radiance is shed upon it.

These letters have been marked by a fine reserve. The soldiers do not babble

about death or speak of it with flippancy or sentimentalism. They recognize its constant presence, accept the fact cheerfully, and speak of it freely as "to go West."

Donald Hankey writes:

Personally, I believe that very few men indeed fear death. The vast majority experience a more or less violent shrinking from the pain of death and wounds, especially when they are obliged to be physically inactive, and when they have nothing else to think about. This . . . is a purely physical reaction which can be, and nearly always is, controlled by the mind.¹

Coningsby Dawson puts the soldier's point of view in these words:

Alive or "gone West" I shall never be far from you; you may depend on that—and I shall always hope to feel you brave and happy.

And yet, so strange a havoc does this war work that, if I have to "go West" I shall go *proudly* and quietly. I have seen too many men die bravely to make a fuss if my turn comes.²

As we read the letters of the soldiers we cannot fail to be impressed by the frankness and fearlessness with which they face the supreme issue. Many pages of quotations might be given. The following are only a few, but they are typical of what the soldiers have uniformly written about death.

Before departing for the front Enzo Valentini made his will and testament, to be opened only in the case of his death, the last poetic words of which are: "Be strong, little mother. From beyond, he sends to you his farewell, to papa, to his brothers, to all who have loved him—your son who has given his body to fight against those who would kill the light."³

¹ *A Student in Arms*, Series 2, p. 121.

² *Carry On*, pp. 80, 85.

³ N. P. Dawson *The Good Soldier* (1918), p. 3.

Try, if you can, not to weep for me too much. Think that even if I do not return, I am not for that reason dead. It, my body, the inferior part of me, may suffer and die, but not I. I, the soul, cannot die, because I come from God and must return to God. I was born for happiness, and through the happiness that is at the bottom of all suffering, I am to return into everlasting joy. If at times I have been the prisoner of my body, it has not been for always. My death is a liberation, the beginning of the true life, the return to the Infinite. Therefore, do not weep for me. If you think of the immortal beauty of the Ideas for which my soul has desired to sacrifice my body, let the tears flow. They will always be sacred, the tears of a mother. May God keep count of them; they will be the stars of her crown.¹

What are our lives worth when we think of the years of happiness and peace of those who will follow us and those who may survive us? We labor for to-morrow, in order that there may be no more wars, no more spilling of blood, no more killing, no more wounded, no more mutilated victims; we labor, we whom our mothers will so weep for, in order that other mammas may never know these bitter tears. In truth, when one thinks of the centuries that this peace will last, one is ashamed of the rebellious movement which the flesh is guilty of at certain moments at the thought of death.²

Death is nothing terrible after all. It may mean something more wonderful than life. It cannot possibly mean anything worse to the good soldier. So do not be unhappy, but no matter what happens walk with your head high and glory in your large share of whatever credit the world may give me.³

This manly and fearless attitude of mind on the part of the men who were actually face to face with death must effect a transformation in the manner in which the fact will be treated in the pulpit. Death will never again be used as a nursemaid's bogey to frighten reluctant sinners to the mourner's bench. The ancient "deathbed" illustrations and threats of sudden loss of life had well-nigh vanished from the preaching of the most intelligent churches; but they still prevailed among the more emotional types of religious expression and were used by evangelists to quicken the tread of penitents along the sawdust trail. But now they surely are gone, never to return. Death has been given a noble dignity and will be accepted as an essential factor in life, not to be kept veiled under a fair name or feared like a ghost expected to walk in grewsome suddenness out of a dark corner, but rather to be incorporated into a fearless and useful life,

"Life that shall send
A challenge to its end,
And, when it comes, say, Welcome,
Friend."

Turning, now, to the interpretations of the fact of suffering and death which have been published, we are impressed by the number and character of the voices that have spoken. They range from the notes of denial to the "demonstrations" of personal immortality by the disciples of spiritism.

Mr. Galsworthy says, "Not one Englishman in ten now really believes

¹ From a letter of Enzo Valentini of Perugia, quoted in *The Good Soldier*, p. 4.

² Captain André Cornet-Auquier, *A Soldier Unafraid*, p. 30.

³ "Letters and Diary of Alan Seeger," quoted in *The Good Soldier*, p. 69.

that he is going to live again." He also says, concerning the French soldiers, "The *poilu* has no faith at all now, if he ever had, save faith in his country." Mr. Wells refuses to discuss the matter at all, saying, "The reality of religion is our self-identification with God . . . and the achievement of his kingdom, in our hearts and in the world. Whether we live forever or die tomorrow does not affect righteousness."¹

Winifred Kirkland disposes of Galsworthy's superficial judgment in a single stinging sentence:

One wonders if it is conceivable that Mr. Galsworthy has read the many brief, immortal credos of the many Englishmen who have left us their breathless, blotted memoirs of the trenches, or has been deaf to the triumph songs of parents who have survived them, or that he can fail to have been stirred by the flaming faith of the young soldiers of France.²

It is an ungracious act to call a distinguished man an ignoramus; but it is effectively done here according to the merits of the case.

Turning to the discussions of death and immortality, the preacher will find Harry Emerson Fosdick's *Assurance of Immortality* a satisfying statement. He does not base the confidence in immortal life upon the teaching or resurrection of Jesus, as the Christian apologetic has so often done. He shows that our faith in the life immortal is grounded in:

1. The scientific affirmation that the universe is reasonable.
2. The religious faith that the universe is friendly.

3. The endorsement of the world's spiritual seers.

4. The voice of our own noblest moods and moments.

5. The value of the truth for daily living.

Perhaps the most significant recent American discussion of the subject is *The New Death* by Winifred Kirkland. This appeared first as an essay in the *Atlantic Monthly* and was later elaborated and published in book form. Certain points made by the author are significant for the modern preacher's work. The discussion is carried on quite independently of any scientific or religious considerations; nor does it deal with theories concerning immortality. The point of view is presented in the following paragraphs:

A study of the New Death cannot too often emphasize the point that it is not a study of abstract truth about death, but a study of the fact that myriads of people are to-day ordering their lives on the hypothesis of immortality.³

Not for a century has interest in the great themes of death, immortality, and the life everlasting been so widespread and so profound. The war has made a new heaven, let us trust that it may aid in making a new earth.⁴

This new conception differs in at least three respects from the current ideas concerning immortality which have obtained in the past.

First, it is not something reached by the moral and intellectual leaders of the people and handed down to them by their teachers and guides. On the contrary, the millions who hold it have not

¹ *God the Invisible King*, p. xviii.

² *The New Death*, p. 7.

³ Winifred Kirkland, *The New Death*, p. 21.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

looked either to the scientists or the theologians for leadership on this matter. They have shaped their own faith and made their own affirmations. The new idea of death is popular.

It is not always that the popular mind moves in advance of accredited intellectual leaders, but it appears that to-day the common people have become their own prophets, that a belief in personal survival is becoming so strong an influence in thousands of humble and bereaved homes that it would seem as if novelists and psychologists should reckon with it as an important phase of the contemporary, however little they accept it as a philosophy for themselves.¹

The New Death, now entering history as an influence . . . is a gerat intuition entering into the lives of the simple, the sort of people who have made the past and will make the future. It does not matter in the least whether or not the intellectuals share this intuition; . . . what matters is the effect upon emergent public life and private of the fact that every day men and women are believing the dead live.²

Again, this new idea of death and immortality is an *intuition*, as indicated in the paragraph last quoted. The common people who hold it so widely and so steadfastly have not reached their conclusions through processes of reason. Nor do they rely upon proofs of the ordinary kind for the validating of their convictions. They put it in such a simple proposition as this: "No science can convince us that we have not a soul when we feel it suffer so."³

Finally, this new conception of death influences practically the conduct of living men and women. We remember the dismay with which we read the conclusions of Dr. Osler, to the effect that

whatever men and women believed about immortality, they lived and died uninfluenced by their doctrine. Now, according to this student of the matter, it is quite otherwise. The idea *works*.

That our dead are alive and the same that we loved, and that they joyously continue the upward march, is the dominating faith of the New Death. There is in this creed nothing new, except the incalculable novelty that never before did so many people evolve it, each for himself, and never before did so many people practice it as the deepest inspiration of their daily conduct.⁴

There is nothing new about immortality, there is nothing new about God; there is everything new in the fact that we are at last willing to live as if we believed in both. This is the religion of the New Death.⁵

This study of the subject ought to be seriously reckoned with by any preacher who seeks to bring the comfort of the gospel to those who are suffering from the death of their dearest in the Great War.

A problem forced to the center of our thinking by the present situation is the "salvation" of soldiers who have fallen in action. There are two judgments on the matter. One is voiced by Cardinal Mercier in the famous pastoral, "Patriotism and Endurance," of Christmas, 1914. He wrote:

I was asked lately by a staff officer whether a soldier falling in a righteous cause—and our cause is such, to demonstration—is not veritably a martyr. Well, he is not a martyr in the rigorous theological meaning of the word, inasmuch as he dies in arms, whereas the martyr delivers himself, undefended and unarmed, into the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

hands of the executioner. But if I am asked what I think of the eternal salvation of a brave man who has conscientiously given his life in defence of his country's honor, and in vindication of violated justice, I shall not hesitate to reply that without any doubt whatever Christ crowns his military valor, and that death, accepted in this Christian spirit, assures the safety of that man's soul. "Greater love than this no man hath," said our Saviour, "that a man lay down his life for his friends." And the soldier who dies to save his brothers, and to defend the hearths and altars of his country, reaches this highest of all degrees of charity. He may not have made a close analysis of the value of his sacrifice; but must we suppose that God requires of the plain soldier in the excitement of battle the methodical precision of the moralist or the theologian? Can we who revere his heroism doubt that his God welcomes him with love?

This is put still more clearly in the words which a priest, serving in the armies of France, is reported to have used constantly in his addresses to the soldiers: "Tell each one of your men that he who dies in honor on the field is sure of going straight to heaven."¹

Another expression of this idea may be found in the signed editorial of E. S. M[artin] in *Life* (August 15, 1918), the concluding paragraphs of which read as follows:

We speak of the dead in the casualty lists as having "lost their lives," but do we think so?

The deeper we get into the war the less we shall think so; the more most of us will feel that our dead have not lost their lives, but quite the contrary.

That feeling is one of the great things that the war is bringing to pass. For four years the war has kept before Belgium and

France and Britain the proposition that there are things that are worth more than life. To that suggestion the people of those countries, and later the Italians, have steadfastly assented. Now it comes our turn, and we shall give the same testimony.

Behind so much unanimity must be a silent confidence that lives given in a great cause are not lost, not extinguished, but persist, unchanged except for better, in personality.

That is the great consolation for the readers of the casualty lists.

On the other hand it is reported that Rev. Mark Matthews, of Seattle, preaching in the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York, in August, 1918, was greeted with applause (said to have been extended by visitors and not by the regular attendants) when he affirmed: "Hard as it may be, the impenitent American boy, in uniform, killed in battle, dies in his sins and is lost. I honor him as far as it is possible. I wish he had repented and accepted Christ. But he had his chance."

This is the other side of the matter. Preachers who are ministering to the parents of soldiers who have died in battle will do some earnest thinking before they are willing to occupy either position. How does anyone know whether the soldier in uniform killed in battle has "repented and accepted Christ" or not? "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." When an American boy gives his life for the cause of freedom and makes the supreme sacrifice in order that all boys who live after him may be free from the peril that has cost him his life, does he have to

¹ Barrès, *The Faith of France*, p. 38.

be a member of the largest church on the Pacific coast in order to assure us that he has "accepted Christ"? Passing now to the task of preaching on these subjects, this question is pertinent: How far shall a minister seek in his preaching to justify God or to furnish a theodicy for the people? Some men make the attempt. This is most unwise. It is not possible to explain the strange ways of God. We may fully believe that there is reason as well as love behind the events that issue in the death of a kinsman or comrade. But to prove it is most difficult. We can understand the words that Professor George Herbert Palmer of Harvard wrote concerning the death of his wife:

Though no regrets are proper for the manner of her death, who can contemplate the fact of it and not call the world irrational, if out of deference to a few particles of disordered matter it excludes so fair a spirit?¹

The only safe attitude of the minister as he seeks to bring comfort to troubled hearts is to stand humbly and reverently in the presence of the experiences that come and say that the judgments of the Lord "are true and righteous altogether."

We have to make our appeal to faith and the future. As Fosdick says: "It is entirely possible that the incidental evils of a process, leading toward a worthy consummation, may be explicable when the process is complete."² The present woes of life are inexplicable; but the results will doubtless vindicate the love and wisdom of the hard and

mysterious process, as the finished vase justifies the potter's firm touch and the biting furnace flame.

Suggestions for Sermons on Death and Immortality

Suggestion 1

"For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: Now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known" (I Cor. 13:12).

WITH PERFECT VISION

Such a text needs illustration. Naturally the thought of the "steamed" mirror will come at once to mind; when the moisture is rubbed away we can use the mirror. Or the corroded mirrors that have been found in the ruins of Roman cities and may be seen in museums may be used to explain the text. Their silvered and polished surfaces are useless now; they must be burnished once more. But in any condition, the mirror does not give us the satisfaction of the look into the eyes of our dear ones "face to face." That is the final revelation; and in the days of sorrow we must look ahead to the life eternal for this revelation.

Another illustration comes from a recent book, the work of a great preacher, and is so clear that it is worth exact quotation:

I have in my mind's eye a little Parable of Consolation. It consists of an old book-marker, once belonging to my dear mother, and very precious now to her son. A text is worked on it, in blue silk on the pierced card. A few years ago I found it in a book, after having long lost sight of it. I saw first its "wrong side"; and that was just an unmeaning tangle of confused and crossing threads. Then I turned it round. On the "right side," in beautiful clear letters, *produced by the tangled stitches*, I read these three deep, glorious, eternal words, "God is love."

¹ Quoted in Fosdick, *Assurance of Immortality*, p. 12.

² *Ibid.*, p. 123.

Was it not a parable? Here on earth we see the "wrong side" of the Great Consoler's work. There, above, we shall read the "right side" in the very light of Heaven. We shall understand then that the right side *was worked out through the wrong side*. Our sorrows, your sorrows, were the tangled stitches, and all the while they were "working out the weight of glory," the glory of *seeing* at last, "with open face," that God is love.

Just seven years ago, February 21, 1909, I took that dear book-marker up into a pulpit and let it preach a sermon to stricken hearts. At West Stanley, in County Durham, an awful pit disaster had occurred; one hundred and sixty-nine men and lads had died together at that explosion. On the Sunday evening following I preached there, to a church quite full of mourners. I held up my mother's card to them, and pointed out its message of faith and hope. And I happen to know that the old book-marker brought more light and help to the mourners that night than all the rest of my sermon put together.¹

The card to which Bishop Moule refers was photographed and reproduced on the inside covers of the little book from which the foregoing quotation is made. It is a telling illustration of the text and truth for which he used it. Without the object itself it would be impossible to employ this illustration so effectively; but with clear and vivid description it may be done. These old texts and mottoes worked with silk or worsted on pierced cardboard will be remembered by all the older members of a congregation. Thus the little "Parable of Consolation" may again become a source of comfort and courage.

Suggestion 2

"A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuseth to be comforted because they are not."

"Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be

rewarded, saith Jehovah; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy" (Jer. 31:15, 16).

BLESSINGS FROM SACRIFICE

- I. The fact of sorrow and death. It cannot be banished from a mortal world. Women's eyes are red with weeping and their children's are not. This cannot be denied.
- II. The comfort of God. One's own resolution can do something; one's friends can do more; God can do most. Sorrowing souls must listen to God.
- III. The rewards are sure. No great sacrifice can be made without a final blessing coming from it. Our great task, that has cost blood and treasure for America, will sometime bless the world.
- IV. Our lost ones shall return, not in physical presence, but in spiritual fruitage, ennobling us, enriching the nation, bringing honor to God.

Suggestion 3

"Redeem Israel, O God,
Out of all his troubles" (Ps. 25:22).

A PRAYER FOR HELP

- I. Israel is in trouble.
- II. Israel cannot escape alone.
- III. God can help Israel.

Suggestion 4

"And he said, While the child was yet alive I fasted and wept: for I said, Who knoweth whether Jehovah will not be gracious unto me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me" (II Sam. 12:22, 23).

¹ H. C. G. Moule, *Christ and Sorrow*, p. 66.

BEACONING SOULS

- I. Our service to the living. The joy and sacrifice of caring for those whom we love.
- II. Our loss and loneliness in the death of loved ones. They cannot return to us.
- III. Our blessed anticipation. They are beacon lights to us in the darkness of the years.

Suggestion 5

"And might deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15).

FEAR'S FETTERS BROKEN

- I. The fear of death. A fact, apparent from the most ignorant savage to the majority of cultivated men.
- II. Efforts to break the bondage of this fear. Reason has spoken, as in the Dialogues of Plato. Nature has been used as a symbol: the wheat and the butterfly. Art has interpreted the experience in terms of hope.
- III. The Christian message. Christ has conquered death, not by driving it out of human experience, but by showing how it is to be made the means to a nobler life here and an immortal life hereafter.

Suggestion 6

"Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah" (Job 1:21).

HIS WILL IS OUR PEACE

- I. God is the giver of all good. We go on our way carelessly and forget to thank

him. We even dishonor his gifts. A sense of their source ought to make us more careful in our use of our powers and opportunities.

- II. God's will permits our possessions to be taken away. The cause is often our own fault. God permits our loss, however. This is a hard doctrine to confess or to understand.

- III. The source of our peace is the sense of God's will. Thousands of Christian soldiers have repeated this old faith of Job in their letters. How to make our sense of God's will real in everyday life.

Suggestion 7

"Death is swallowed up in victory" (I Cor. 15:54).

THE FINAL TRIUMPH

- I. Death is apparent defeat to the highest purposes and noblest efforts of life. Takes the young, the strong, the useful. Apparently acts without any sense of human welfare; takes the statesman and leaves the idiot.
- II. There is a victory that is able to overcome the apparent defeat in death.
 - A. The victory of clear thinking. In our best moments death does not appear to be the end.
 - B. The victory of love. Our affections tell us that death does not stop the soul.
 - C. The victory of faith. We dare believe when we cannot prove.
 - D. The victory of Christ. Because he lives we shall live also.